The Poetry of the Bible

I. The Prevalence of Poetry in the Old Testament

IN THE Bible "there is poetry which has called forth the wonder and admiration of the world. In glowing beauty, in sublime and solemn majesty, in touching pathos, it is unequaled by the most brilliant productions of human genius" (CT 429). "The earliest as well as the most sublime of poetic utterances known to man are found in the Scriptures" (Ed 159). There are no songs like the songs of Zion.

About 40 per cent of the Old Testament is poetry. To the average reader of the KJV and many of the other English versions, this is a startling discovery. He is accustomed to seeing poetry printed in the form of measured lines and stanzas, containing usually a pronounced regular rhythm and rhyme, whereas most of the common versions make little if any typographical distinction between verse and prose. It has been left to certain of the revisers to present the poetry of the Bible in the typographical form of verse.

Most of the Bible poetry appears in the Old Testament: in snatches in the historical books, in passages interwoven with the prose portions of the prophets, and in six books which are poetic as a whole or in great part. Poetry appears in the New Testament only in a few scattered instances, and then chiefly in quotations from the Old Testament.

The importance of poetry and music among the Hebrews is attested by the fact that the Hebrew language has a number of synonyms for the word "song." Among the chief subjects of study in the ancient schools of the prophets, sacred poetry and sacred music held honored places (Ed 47; PP 593).

In the Historical Books. Throughout the historical books of the Old Testament there are instances of poetry employed to illustrate the story, and to lend vividness to the narrative. One of the unique features of Biblical literature consists in the appearance side by side of prose narrative and poetic celebration of the historic event.

For example, immediately following the graphic account of the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea appears the lyric celebration of the overthrow of the Egyptians and the deliverance of Israel, The Song of Moses and Miriam (see Ex. 14, 15 .) This ode is among the oldest victory songs. Following the prose narrative of the defeat of Sisera, captain of the armies of the Canaanite king Jabin, at the hands of the Israelites under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, appears the battle ode usually referred to as The Song of Deborah and Barak (see Judges 4, 5). This poem has been called "the greatest war-song of any age or nation." Following the story of the death of Jonathan and Saul at the hands of the Philistines, appears David's touching Lament (see 1 Sam. 31; 2 Sam. 1). In refinement of taste, in delicacy and perfection of structure, few elegies in world literature rank with this exquisite bit of elegiac poetry.

Instances of poetry appear in all the books of the Pentateuch save Leviticus. There are six in Genesis: The Song of Lamech, 4:23, 24; Noah's Curse on Canaan and Blessing on Japheth, 9:25–27; God's Prophecy to Rebekah, 25:23; Isaac's Blessing of Jacob, 27:27–29; Isaac's Blessing of Esau, 27:39, 40; Jacob's Blessing of His Sons, 49:2–27. The single instance of poetry in Exodus is the superb Song of Moses and Miriam, 15:1–18, 21. Numbers has the following instances: The Aaronic Blessing, 6:24–26; Formulas for Taking Up and Setting Down the Ark, 10:35, 36; Song of the Valley, 21:14, 15; Well Song, 21:17, 18; The Fall of Heshbon, 21:27–30; The Oracles of Balaam, 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–24. Deuteronomy presents The Curses, 27:15–26; The Song of Moses, 32:1–43; and Moses' Blessing of the Twelve Tribes, 33:2–29.

The sole instance of verse in Joshua is Joshua's Command to the Sun and Moon, 10:12, 13. Judges has The Song of Deborah and Barak, 5:1–31; and Samson's riddles, 14:14, 18; 15:16. Ruth includes Ruth's Covenant with Naomi, 1:16, 17. 1 Samuel has Hannah's Thanksgiving, 2:1–10; and snatches from popular songs in praise of David, 18:7; 21:11. 2 Samuel has David's Lament, 1:19–27; David's Elegy on the Death of Abner, 3:33, 34; David's Song of Victory, 22:2–51 (see Ps. 18); and The Last Words of David, 23:1–7. In 1 Chronicles appears David's Anthem for the Induction of the Ark, 16:8–36. In 2 Chronicles there are poetic refrains in 5:13; 6:1, 2; 7:3; 20:21; and the closing ascription of Solomon's Prayer, 6:41, 42.

In the Prophets. The prophetic books of the Old Testament present a unique contribution to the literature of the world in their fusion of prose and poetry in a continuous sequence. In these books prophetic history, oratorical discourse, and poetic celebration are intermingled. The prophet writes the words of divine prophecy; he speaks in the impassioned periods and balanced sentences of sublime oratory, rebuking, entreating, denouncing, consoling his wayward people; and he weaves into the inspired literary product the strains of lyric poetry—the whole forming a literary type wholly unknown in the other literatures of the world.

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah consist of mingled passages of prose and poetry; but chapters 40–66 of the prophecy are almost entirely poetry. Chapters 1–31 and 46–51 of Jeremiah present an intermingling of prose and poetry. There are a few instances of poetry in Ezekiel and Daniel. Most of the so-called minor prophets likewise consist in whole or in part of poetry. Only Haggai and Malachi are exclusively prose. The passionate and often vehement eloquence of the prophets finds expression in the lofty cadences of lyric poetry.

In Books of Poetry. Five books of the Old Testament may be regarded as books of poetry, inasmuch as they consist wholly or chiefly of literature in the form of verse. They are Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, the Song of Solomon, and Job. Psalms, Lamentations, and the Song of Solomon are pure poetry. Job is chiefly poetry—only its prologue and epilogue are in the form of prose. Proverbs is practical philosophy in the form of poetry. In addition to these, Ecclesiastes has a substantial portion of beautiful poetry.

II. The Poetic Books of the Old Testament

Psalms. The psalms are the quintessence of lyric poetry. In their depth of emotion and height of aspiration, in their complete revealing of the inmost thoughts and questionings of the human soul, in the beauty and delicacy, and sometimes strength and majesty, of their expression, they are unrivaled by the loftiest expressions of merely human lyric poetry. For what other poetry can rise to the heights of poetry that has for its theme the soul's search for the eternal God? As the spiritual and the eternal transcends the natural and the ephemeral, so the poetry of Psalms rises above the greatest of the world's lyric treasures.

Proverbs. The characteristic literary form of the Proverbs is the *mashal*, or unit proverb, a simple couplet of two parallel lines expressing with extreme compression of language an axiomatic, self-evident truth. The prevailing form is that of antithetic, or contrasting, parallelism, for example:

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin:

but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19).But there are also numerous instances of synonymous parallelism, for example:

"The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge;
and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge" (Prov. 18:15);and of synthetic parallelism, for example:

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction,
that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end" (Prov. 19:20).

This unit proverb is the literary mold for all the subject matter of chs. 10:22 to 16:33; it is also found irregularly throughout the book.

Often the wisdom of Proverbs takes the form of monologues (see 1:20–33; 7:1 to 8:36); of sonnetlike poems (see 4:10–19; 9:1–18; 24:30–34); of epigrams (see 23:19–21, 26–28, 29–35); and one superb acrostic, or alphabetic, poem that closes the book: the poem The Virtuous Woman (31:10–31). This consists of 22 verses, each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the regular order of that alphabet.

Thus, in a variety of forms, Proverbs attains its object: to inspire reverence for God, to exalt wisdom, and to instruct in practical virtues.

Lamentations. In the Hebrew the book of Lamentations exhibits a unique poetic structure: its metrical system is that of the *qinah* rhythm, and its general form is acrostic, or alphabetic. In the *qinah* rhythm each line has five beats, three in the first half and two in the second half, giving the effect of a long crescendo followed by a shorter decrescendo, as if grief rises to its height and then spends itself more quickly. Moreover, the whole poem is an extended example of *qinah* rhythm, in that the dirge mounts to its height in chapter 3 and more quickly descends to its base level at the end of chapter 5.

The acrostic form of the Lamentations is intricate. The first chapter consists of 22 triplet verses, each verse beginning with initial letters in the regular order of the Hebrew alphabet. The second chapter follows the same pattern, with a slight variation in the order of the alphabet. The third chapter gives acrostic letters to each line of each triplet as a sort of climax to the poem. The fourth chapter changes to couplets of the *qinah* rhythm, with acrostic letters only at the beginning of each couplet. The fifth chapter drops both acrostic structure and *qinah* rhythm, as if the usual literary forms were no longer adequate to express the writer's grief. The poem is a model of artistic structure.

The Song of Solomon. The Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible consisting wholly of poetry in the form of dialogue. It is a lovely example of the Oriental pastoral. The graphic images occurring in rapid succession throughout the book are characteristic of this type of poetry. The Western mind has difficulty in understanding and appreciating the frankness of this imagery. A realization of the figurative nature of the language of this type of poetry will be of help in understanding the message of the book.

Job. Undoubtedly the most artistic product of the Hebrew literary genius is the book of Job. The theme of Job is the age-old problem of human suffering: In a world created and sustained by a just and good God, why should a good man suffer? In a narrative framework of epic proportions, a dramatic dialogue attempts to solve the problem. A debate is carried on in three cycles, Job and his friends alternating in the discussion; but the last cycle is left unfinished—the argument has run out. A young man steps in as if to give the final and ultimate solution to the problem, but God Himself interposes.

The book of Job is remarkable in loftiness of theme and scope of treatment; in the beauty and variety of its descriptions of nature and the extent of its scenic effects in earth

and heaven; and in its consciousness of the presence of God in human experience and its profound insight into the nature of redemption and the reality of a Redeemer.

Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes, or, The Preacher, is the work of Solomon, "the greatest, richest, and wisest king" of all ages (9T 281). The book was written in his later life, when, after years spent in trying to find satisfaction in the pleasures of this world, he realized the wickedness of his course and returned to God, the Source of his wisdom. "And now, having learned through sad experience the folly of such a life, his yearning desire was to save others from entering into the bitter experience through which he had passed" (PK 80).

While most of the subject matter of Ecclesiastes is in the form of prose, there are noble passages of poetry throughout the book, culminating in the poem Remember Now Thy Creator (12:1–8), which is an extended example of the use of Oriental figures of speech.

For a fuller discussion of these five books see the Introduction to each.

III. Characteristics of Biblical Poetry

God-consciousness. The poetry of the Old Testament is characterized by an intense awareness of the reality of God. It teems with a sense of His presence. It is essentially religious. In David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan his love for Jonathan is subordinated to his horror at the shocking irreverence of taking the life of God's anointed king. In The Song of Deborah and Barak vengeance upon the enemy is subordinated to confidence in God. In Hebrew poetry God is everywhere present.

Love of Nature. The poetry of the Old Testament abounds in love of nature. It glows with scenic effects of surpassing beauty. But to the Hebrew poet, the beauty or majesty of nature is never an end in itself. Love of nature leads beyond nature to her Creator and inspires the poet with a more intense devotion to God. "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind" may come, but they come "fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148:8).

In the Psalm of the Thunderstorm (Ps. 29), the poet is stirred not so much by the physical demonstration of the phenomena of nature as by the power and glory and goodness of God revealed in the storm: "in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The LORD sitteth King upon the flood" (vs. 9, 10). Likewise, the activities of wild creatures at night turn the psalmist's thoughts to the One who created them:

"He appointed the moon for seasons:
the sun knoweth his going down.
Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
The young lions roar after their prey,
and seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
and lay them down in their dens. …
O LORD, how manifold are thy works
in wisdom hast thou made them all:
the earth is full of thy riches" (Ps. 104:19–24).

Universal Qualities. In general, the poetry of the Old Testament avoids the abstract, tends to shun extended argument, and abounds in ideas that are common to the human race. It is essentially concrete. And it is sententious, compressing much in little. The most profound ethical truths are couched in the simplest proverbs. That is why it is so

quotable. And it is rich in figures of speech, in similes, and metaphors, and personifications that lend freshness and vigor to its ideas, and make them clear to men of all classes in all nations through all ages.

Beauty in Nature. As instances of beauty in the poetic treatment of nature note the following examples:

The coming of spring.

"For, lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of the singing of birds is come,
and the voice of the turtle [dove]
is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
and the vines with the tender grape
give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away" (S. of Sol. 2:11–13).

The war horse.

"Hast thou given the horse strength?
hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?
the glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength:
he goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted;
neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him,
the glittering spear and the shield.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage:
neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.
He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha;
and he smelleth the battle afar off,
the thunder of the captains, and the shouting" (Job 39:19–25).

Beauty in Human Nature. As examples of the poetic treatment of human nature, note the following:

Filial devotion.

"Intreat me not to leave thee,
or to return from following after thee:
for whither thou goest, I will go;
and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
thy people shall be my people,
and thy God my God.
Where thou diest, will I die,
and there will I be buried:
the LORD do so to me, and more also,
if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16, 17).

Distress on a stormy sea.

"For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths:
their soul is melted because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
and are at their wit's end" (Ps. 107:25–27).

The love of man and maid.

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
so is my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love" (S. of Sol. 2:3, 4).

Ardent patriotism.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
if I prefer not Jerusalem
above my chief joy" (Ps. 137:5, 6).

Poignant grief.

"O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
thy love to me was wonderful.
passing the love of women.
"How are the mighty fallen,
and the weapons of war perished" (2 Sam. 1:25–27).

Perfect trust.

"For I know that my redeemer liveth,
and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:
And though after my skin worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25–27).

Sublimity. As examples of the sublime in poetry, consider these passages:

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
my speech shall distil as the dew,
as the small rain upon the tender herb,
and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32:1, 2).

"Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place,
thou, and the ark of thy strength:

let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
and let thy saints rejoice in goodness" (2 Chron. 6:41).
"Lift up your eyes on high,
and behold who hath created these things,
that bringeth out their host by number:
he calleth them all by names
by the greatness of his might,
for that he is strong in power;
not one faileth" (Isa. 40:26).

IV. The Metrical Elements of Hebrew Poetry

General. Unlike most modern English poetry, Hebrew poetry does not depend upon a verse scheme of regularly recurring accent and rhyme. Its accent is irregular, and its rhyme, if it occurs at all, seems casual or accidental. For those who must read the Bible in translation, the most significant metrical basis of Hebrew verse consists of the balanced symmetry of form and sense known as parallelism. The first scholar to examine fully the nature of Hebrew poetry and to put its study upon a sound basis was Bishop Robert Lowth, Oxford scholar and professor. In his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753), Lowth designated the tendency of Hebrew poetry to arrange statements in pairs, like a sound and its echo, as parallelism of members. Watts-Dunton has called it "sense rhythm," and Van Dyke has described it as "thought-rhythm." Of this distinguishing element in the structure of Hebrew poetry, Stanley says: "The rapid strokes as of alternate wings, the heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart, which have been beautifully described as the essence of the parallel structure of all Hebrew verse, are exactly suited for the endless play of human feeling, and for the understanding of every age and nation." It is worthy of note that this poetic feature has been rendered almost without loss into English. While the source of the factor of parallelism is unknown, it should be observed that the element of parallelism as a characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry is shared in common with such other ancient literatures as the Egyptian, the Assyro-Babylonian, and the Canaanite.

An example of parallelism of structure in its simplest form may be seen in the so-called Sword Song, or Song of Lamech (Gen. 4:23, 24), which is probably the oldest example of poetry in the Bible. In this six-line song of Lamech's, the parallel structure of Hebrew verse appears in its utter simplicity. The poem consists of three synonymous couplets or parallelisms.

"Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice;
ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
for I have slain a man to my wounding,
and a young man to my hurt.
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

With this example as a beginning, we pass on to a fuller explanation and exemplification of the principle of parallelism as the chief determining factor in Hebrew verse.

Primary Forms of Parallelism. Three primary forms of parallelism are generally recognized:

1. Synonymous parallelism, in which the fundamental thought is repeated in different words and images in the second line of the couplet, for example:

"Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;
and hearken unto Israel your father" (Gen. 49:2).

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (Joshua 10:12).

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:8).

2. Antithetical or contrasted parallelism, in which the thought of the first line of a couplet is further explained by its contrast or reversal in the second line, for example:

"So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD:
but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth
in his might" (Judges 5:31).

"For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Ps. 1:6).

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion;
but his favour is as dew upon the grass" (Prov. 19:12).

3. Synthetic, or constructive, parallelism, in which the second line of the couplet adds a thought to the first line by way of completion, enlargement, or intensification. The two lines may stand in the relation of cause and effect, proviso and conclusion, proposition and supplement, etc., for example:

"Yet have I set my king
upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6).

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God" (Ps. 14:2).

"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (Prov. 15:17).

"Answer a fool according to his folly,
lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Prov. 26:5).

"He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye,
and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him" (Prov. 28:22).

Secondary Forms of Parallelism. In addition to the primary forms of parallelism, three secondary forms have been recognized:

1. Emblematic parallelism, an embellished type of synonymous parallelism, in which a figure of speech or image of some kind is used to develop the thought, for example:

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers,
neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
and wither as the green herb" (Ps. 37:1, 2).

"Let them all be confounded and turned back
that hate Zion.
Let them be as the grass upon the housetops,
which withereth afore it groweth up:
Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand;
nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

Neither do they which go by say,
The blessing of the LORD be upon you:
we bless you in the name of the LORD" (Ps. 129:5–8).

2. Climactic, or stairlike, parallelism, a vigorous type of synthetic parallelism in which a key word or phrase, or several words or phrases, are repeated and carried over till the thought is completed at the very end of the extended parallelism, for example:

"… for he cometh,
for he cometh to judge the earth:
he shall judge the world with righteousness,
and the people with his truth" (Ps. 96:13).

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord,
which made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:1–4).

3. Introverted parallelism, a type of parallelism in which the first and last of a series of lines are similar and enclose a number of lines developing the basic idea, for example:

"I cried to thee, O LORD;
and unto the LORD I made supplication.
What profit is there in my blood,
when I go down to the pit?
Shall the dust praise thee?
shall it declare thy truth?
Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:
LORD, be thou my helper" (Ps. 30:8–10).

"The face of the LORD is against them that do evil,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth,
and delivereth them out of all their troubles.
The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous:
but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
He keepeth all his bones:
not one of them is broken.
Evil shall slay the wicked:
and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate" (Ps. 34:16–21).

Variations in Parallelism. The simplest and most common form of parallelism is the two-line unit, or couplet, but this is often augmented to three or four lines, and may be extended to a considerable number of lines in a great variety of combinations. Thus, several consecutive lines may be synonymous, for example:

"The floods have lifted up, O LORD,

the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their waves" (Ps. 93:3).
"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
how shall I deliver thee, Israel?
how shall I make thee as Admah?
how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" (Hosea 11:8).
"That our sons may be as plants
grown up in their youth;
that our daughters may be as corner stones,
polished after the similitude of a palace:
That our garners may be full,
affording all manner of store:
that our sheep may bring forth thousands
and ten thousands in our streets:
That our oxen may be strong to labour;
that there be no breaking in, nor going out;
that there be no complaining in our streets" (Ps. 144:12–14).

Sometimes two synonymous lines may be augmented by a third, for example:

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn,
my might, and the beginning of my strength,
the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power" (Gen. 49:3).
"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:
thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies;
thy father's children shall bow down before thee" (Gen. 49:8).

Or the first two lines may be synonymous, and the third in the nature of a supplement to the basic thought, for example:

"The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord, and against his anointed" (Ps. 2:2).
"Joseph is a fruitful bough,
even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall" (Gen. 49:22).

Sometimes in a four-line unit the first and third lines are parallel, and likewise the second and fourth, in a sort of interlaced pattern, for example:

" The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
the LORD is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1).
"Their land also is full of silver and gold,
neither is there any end of their treasures;
their land is also full of horses,
neither is there any end of their chariots" (Isa. 2:7).

Such variety of arrangement permits the cumulation of thought, clause by clause, throughout an entire poem, the several clauses being interspersed with the repetition of a refrain, as in Ps. 136:

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:

for his mercy endureth for ever.
O give thanks unto the God of gods:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
O give thanks to the LORD of lords:
for his mercy endureth for ever" (vs. 1–3).

Numerous other developments and variations in parallelism could be exemplified, but these will suffice to show that there is a close relationship between thought and metrical structure in Hebrew poetry, that Hebrew poetry admits of the greatest freedom and variety of structure, and that an appreciation of parallel structure is an aid to the understanding and exegesis of a given passage of poetry.

Accent. Another element of Hebrew meter, also shared in common with the Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian, and Canaanite literatures, is the factor of recurring accent, or beat. However, when accent, or stress, is recognized as a feature of Hebrew verse structure, it is not implied that the accent occurs regularly in the line and that there is a regular distribution of accented and unaccented syllables in the line, as in conventional English verse. Rather the accent occurs a given number of times in the line, irrespective of the number of syllables. The typical line of Hebrew lyric poetry is divided into two parts, with two accented syllables in each half.

In elegiac poetry and in other highly emotional poetry the typical line has three accents in the first half and two accents in the second half; this rhythm is called the *qinah* rhythm. Its effect is that of a crescendo of three beats followed by a shorter decrescendo of two beats. An apt illustration of such rhythm is found in the Hebrew of Amos 5:2:

"The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise:
she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up."

In epic, didactic, and liturgical poetry the typical line tends to show three accented syllables in each half. Longer lines than these admit more accents to the line, and various combinations are possible. But in none of these arrangements is there any relationship whatsoever between accented syllables and the number of unaccented syllables between accents. Unfortunately, the accentual basis of Hebrew verse is not shown in translation. Furthermore, many questions having to do with this element of prosody in Hebrew verse are yet unanswered.

Other Elements. In addition to the factors of parallelism and irregular accent in Hebrew poetry, such other elements of verse as strophic, or stanzaic, structure, refrain, acrostic arrangement, assonance, and vividness of diction are noteworthy.

The poem as a whole is frequently broken into a series of strophes, or stanzas, to indicate change of thought within the larger unit. Sometimes these stanzas are of equal or nearly equal length, as in Ps. 1, 42, 43, 119. More often their length is unequal, analogous to the paragraphs of prose. Stanzaic division is sometimes marked by a refrain, as in Ps. 42, 43, 46, 57, 67; infrequently this refrain is augmented as the poem continues, as in vs. 19, 25, and 27 of 2 Sam. 1, wherein David laments over Saul and Jonathan, enlarging the refrain "How are the mighty fallen" with its second and third repetitions.

Sometimes, as in the Proverbs, a poem may consist of stanzas organized individually and arranged as symmetrically as the component parts of an English sonnet, for example, Prov. 6:6–11; or 24:30–34. Sometimes the methods of introverted parallelism are extended to a whole poem, the opening and closing stanzas of a poem constituting a sort of envelopment of the intervening subject matter, as in Ps. 8.

Acrostic, or alphabetic, arrangement, wherein successive verses or stanzas begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, appears in the Hebrew of several poems, for example, Ps. 37, 119 and Prov. 31:10–31.

Assonance, or correspondence of vowel sounds within the line, which is not evident in translations of the Bible, appears in the Hebrew of such verses as Isa. 5:7, where the Hebrew words for "judgment" and "oppression," and also those for "righteousness" and "cry" have similar vowel sounds. And in the Hebrew of Isa. 17:12, 13, the onomatopoeic effect (adaptation of sound to the expression of sense) is marked, giving the impression of ocean surf thundering on the shore and crashing on the rocky coast. Vividness and concrete diction, characteristics of the Hebrew language, become especially apparent in the Hebrew poetry; for example, complete despair is expressed in a succession of vivid pictures in Ps. 69:1–3; the misery of being forsaken of God is depicted in a galaxy of concrete images in Lam. 3:1–16.

Surely in the poetry of the Hebrews, beauty of thought and beauty of form are joined in perfect union. The light of life shines from a beautiful lamp. The jewel of truth glows in a glittering casket. Let us worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Musical Instruments of the Ancient Hebrews

MUSIC played a great role in the religious life of the ancient Hebrews, and types of instruments existing from the earliest days of this world's history (Gen. 4:21) were found among God's people in great variety (see Ps. 150). Musical performances took place in connection with many great events of the history of the children of Israel. Their victorious deliverance from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea was celebrated by singing to the accompaniment of a timbrel (Ex. 15:20). The blowing of trumpets was the signal for the miraculous fall of Jericho's walls (Joshua 6:16). David's orchestra, which played at the occasion of the transfer of the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, contained at least five different kinds of instruments (2 Sam. 6:5). Solomon's Temple contained an elaborate musical organization for the various services carried on there.

Musical instruments, like all other objects in daily use, have a long history and have changed their outward form in many details. Some ancient instruments are no longer known. Others have taken their place. Today, there exists a greater variety of instruments than ever before, and often the same name may designate an entirely different instrument from what it did long ago. For example, the term "organ" in Gen. 4:21 conveys an entirely wrong idea to the minds of those who try to compare Jubal's instrument with a modern organ. Likewise, most people have no correct idea of a timbrel (Ex. 15:20), a psaltery (Ps. 150:3), or a tabret (Gen. 31:27).

A number of important studies on this subject have appeared in the past, of which the most helpful in the preparation of this article were the following: J. Wellhausen's Appendix, "Music of the Ancient Hebrews," to his work *The Book of Psalms,* which appeared in 1898 in The Polychrome Bible, edited by P. Haupt. The most up-to-date study on musical instruments from ancient to modern times, *The History of Musical Instruments,* has been written by Curt Sachs (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1940), in which ch. 5 deals with the Israelite musical instruments. A popularly written article like the present one appeared in *The Biblical Archaeologist,* vol. 4 (September, 1941), pp. 33–47, under the title "Musical Instruments of Israel," by Ovid R. Sellers. To all these works the author of the present article gratefully acknowledges his debt.

Very few contemporary pictures of musical instruments of OT times exist from Palestine, and the only ancient Palestine, musical instrument extant is cymbals, a pair of which has been excavated at Beth-shemesh, and another pair at *Tell Abū Hawâm*; also, the handle of a sistrum has come to light at Bethel. Yet the archeological material that Egypt and Mesopotamia have brought to light affords much illustrative evidence for a reasonably clear understanding of Hebrew music. Since the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians employed very similar instruments, it is reasonable to suppose that the ancient Hebrews, living between the two cultures, on the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates, had musical instruments which did not vary much from those of their neighbors. Hence, some of the identifications proposed in this article are based on the evidence from those countries that have furnished us with rich pictorial material, and on actual ancient musical instruments that have survived in Egypt's dry climate in profuse numbers. That in spite of this rich material there are still uncertainties in regard to some terms used in the Bible to describe musical instruments must be acknowledged. This is the reason for some variances and inconsistencies found in this regard in the modern Bible translations.

I. Percussion Instruments

Drum.—The reader may not remember having read the word *drum* in the OT, and he is right as for the KJV. Yet, the Hebrew word *toph*, translated eight times "tabret" and nine times "timbrel" in the KJV, and "tambourine" or "timbrel" in the RSV, actually was a "hand drum," according to experts in ancient musical instruments. Sachs says that "this drum was made of a wooden hoop and very probably two skins, without any jingling contrivance or sticks" (*op. cit.,* p. 108). The Talmud claims that the skin was taken either from rams or from wild goats. It was an instrument mainly played by women, but occasionally by men. Beaten by the hands, it must have made a kind of tom-tom sound, and accompanied singing and dancing to accentuate the beat. It seems to have been played only on joyous occasions, as the following Biblical examples, which mention this instrument, indicate.

Laban claims that this instrument was played in his household on festive occasions (Gen. 31:27). Miriam played it to accompany her singing after the deliverance of the children of Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20), and Jephthah's daughter came out with a hand drum to meet her victorious father (Judges 11:34). The prophets whom Saul met after his anointing to the kingship and whom he joined played this instrument (1 Sam. 10:5), as well as the girls who met Saul and David after their victorious return from the battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:6). Hand drums were found in the orchestra which David employed on the occasion of the transfer of the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:5), and the psalmist encourages his readers to use this instrument in their praises of the Lord (Ps. 149:3; 150:4).

Cymbals.—The English word *cymbals* comes from Greek *kumbala*, which the LXX uses as a translation of the Hebrew *selselim*, 3 times in the OT, and of the Hebrew *mesiltayim*, which is used 13 times in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Both terms are derived from the verb *salal*, to "clash," "jingle," and "tingle," showing that the sound of the name suggests the sound which the instrument produces. Ps. 150:5 distinguishes between "loud" and "high sounding" (KJV) or "sounding" and "loud clashing" (RSV)

cymbals. The Hebrew adjective of the former term is *shema‘*, meaning “clear,” while the Hebrew adjective used to distinguish the latter is *teru‘ah*, which means “harsh,” and “noisy.” The noisy cymbals were beaten in a vertical movement, of which Figure 2 shows an example from an Assyrian relief, but the clear cymbals were struck with a horizontal movement of the hands.

As already mentioned, two pairs of cymbals have been found in the excavations of Palestine; the cymbals from *Tell Abū Hawâm*, of which measurements have been published, have a diameter of about 4 in. They have holes in the center through which thongs were probably thrust, and then knotted together on the inside.

The cymbals are not mentioned in the Bible before the time of David. Although they are also found in the Mesopotamian valley, as Figure 2 shows, they seem to have been unknown in ancient Egypt until the Christian Era. Their use is confined to religious ceremonies in the Bible. They area mentioned as instruments in David’s orchestra when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:5), and frequently in connection with temple music (2 Chron. 5:12; 29:25; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:27; etc.).

Sistrum.—In the list of instruments of which the orchestra of David was constituted at the memorable occasion, already referred to, when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:5), a type of musical instrument is mentioned that appears nowhere else in the Bible. The Hebrew *mena‘an‘im*, translated “cornets” in the KJV and “castanets” in the RSV, is derived from the Hebrew *nua‘*, “to shake.” The LXX contains the translation *kumbala*, “cymbals,” which cannot be correct, since the “cymbals” are not shaken but struck against each other. The Vulgate seems to have the best translation, *sistris*.

The sistrum is a well-known Egyptian musical instrument. It consisted of a handle with a metal loop above the handle. Holes were bored through the loop, and pieces of wire inserted with ends bent. Since the holes were larger than the wires, the instrument made a rattling sound when shaken. This instrument was usually connected with Hathor or Isis worship in Egypt, for which reason Sachs formerly thought that the translation “sistra” must be rejected in 2 Sam. 6:5. Yet, sistra have been excavated in Sumerian cemeteries of southern Mesopotamia completely unconnected with this cult, so that Sachs now thinks that David may have used these instruments (*op. cit.,* p. 121). A Hathor-headed handle of a sistrum was excavated at Bethel in Palestine in 1934 in a pre-Israelite level, showing that the sistrum was known among the Canaanites. This does not, however, prove its employment by the Hebrews.

Some clay rattles were excavated at *Tell Beit Mirsim*, perhaps Biblical Debir, in an occupation level of the ruined mound which was contemporary with David’s reign. These rattles have the shape of hourglasses and contain some pebbles in the hollow interior. Whether they were really musical instruments like the sistra or children’s toys cannot be ascertained.

Triangle.—Some musical instrument used by the girls who welcomed Saul and David after their victorious return from the battle against the Philistines is called in Hebrew *shalishim*, which is translated in the KJV “instruments of musick” (1 Sam. 18:6). The RSV renders the term in the same way, but adds the marginal note, “Or *triangles,* or *three-stringed instruments.”* The word in question is the most disputed of all those

Hebrew words that describe musical instruments in the Bible. Since it is clearly connected with Hebrew *shalosh*, "three," or *shelishi*, "the third," translators have suggested, besides the terms already mentioned, that it might be rendered also "triangular harps" or "three-stringed lutes."

Since the triangle is nowhere attested in ancient times, the correctness of this translation is very questionable, yet there is no certainty that any of the other suggestions is better. Sachs (*op. cit.,* p. 123) suggests that this word was a technical term for a certain form of dance, such as the Roman *tripudium*, in which can also be seen the Latin word for "three." Sellers (*op. cit.,* p. 45), however, rejects this suggestion, and the whole problem must be considered as unsolved.

II. Stringed Instruments

Harp.—In every instance where the word "harp" is found in the OT the Hebrew and Aramaic terms have been misunderstood by the modern translators, and the actual ancient harp has been given other names in the Bible. Harps were in common use both in Mesopotamia and in Egypt from very early times. The earliest representation of a harp, and eleven-stringed instrument, is depicted on a stone relief from Lagash (Lower Mesopotamia) which was made before 2000 B.C. Mesopotamian harps had the sounding box either above, as the example from Assyria (Fig. 4) shows, or below, like all Egyptian harps (Figs. 5 and 6). The Egyptian harps were usually of such a large size that they were set on the ground when played.

The Biblical instrument that can be compared with the harps of Egypt or Mesopotamia is the one called *nebel* in the Hebrew Bible. *Nebel* is in the first place the name for a skin bottle, but in 27 instances the name of a musical instrument that is rendered "psaltery" 23 times and "viol" 4 times in the KJV. The LXX offers *nabla* in 14 cases, which is simply a transliteration into Greek of the Hebrew *nebel*, but renders this word 8 times *psalterion*, "harp," and once *kithara*, "zither." The Vulgate contains the translation *psalterium*, "harp," 17 times, *lyra* 4 times, and *nablium* 3 times, the simple transliteration of the Hebrew word *nebel*. Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate, explains that the sounding box was above on these instruments, which, if correct, would prove that the Hebrew harp was similar in shape to the Assyrian harp shown in Figure 4. Its body, rising above the string holder, was rounded and completely covered with skin, for which reason, according to Jewish rabbinical sources, this instrument had received the name *nebel*, which originally applied to a skin bottle. The same sources claim that the *nebel* had more and larger strings than the lyre, and hence produced a sound that was lower in pitch. Josephus, writing in the 1st century A.D., states that this instrument had 12 strings, which were plucked with the bare fingers. All these observations and statements make it virtually certain that the Hebrew *nebel* was a "harp."

A study of the Biblical references to this instrument shows that it was almost exclusively used for religious purposes. The prophets whom Saul met after his anointing by Samuel carried a harp, besides other instruments (1 Sam. 10:5), and harps belonged to David's orchestra at the bringing in of the ark (2 Sam. 6:5). Numerous texts mention this

instrument as part of the Temple orchestra (see 1 Chron. 15:16, 20, 28; Neh. 12:27; etc.), and the psalmist exhorts his readers to use it in order to praise the Lord (Ps. 150:3).

Lyre.—In 42 texts of the OT a musical instrument is mentioned by the Hebrew word *kinnor*, rendered each time "harp" in the KJV, but "lyre" in the RSV. The LXX offers the translation *kithara* 20 times, and a mere transliteration *kinura* 17 times. The Vulgate renders it *cithara* 37 times, and *lyra* twice. The Greek *kithara*, the Roman *cithara*, was a special kind of "lyre." Hence, the reader can see from the enumeration of the ancient translations that the instrument called regularly "harp" in the OT actually was a "lyre." The last doubt is silenced by the fact that the Egyptians designated the "lyre" by the word *kniniwr*, a word borrowed from the Semitic *kinnor*.

Ancient pictures from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine have preserved for us representations of the lyre used in the homeland of the Israelites during different periods. On the famous wall painting of Beni Hasan depicting the arrival in Egypt of 37 Amorites from Canaan, about 1900 B.C., a man is shown playing a lyre (Fig. 7). Since lyres were at that time not known in Egypt, this Semite was a novelty, and was deemed worthy of picturing. The illustration shows that eight strings were stretched across the sounding board, past a blank space, and were then attached to a crossbar. With his right hand the performer draws a plectrum across the strings and uses the left hand for deadening those strings not intended to make sounds.

The next pictorial representation comes from Palestine itself. A lyre player is shown on a decorated vase that was found at Megiddo in an occupation level of the end of the 11th century B.C. (Fig. 8) and hence comes from the time of Saul, when David played on a lyre before the king to quiet his disturbed mind. This lyre does not differ much from the Beni Hasan instrument with the exception that the crossbar does not run parallel to the sounding box, but at an angle.It also seems to indicate that the instrument had received a more elegant outward shape in the eight centuries that had passed since the Beni Hasan example was drawn.

The third example is a relief discovered at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, dating from the time of the Assyrian king Sennacherib, the foe of King Hezekiah of Judah, about 700 B.C. Three walking Semites are depicted playing lyres while an Assyrian soldier follows them with a drawn dagger, or a mace, in his hand (Fig. 9). Since the performers are pictured exactly as the Jews on the reliefs representing the siege and surrender of Lachish, it is generally believed that the three lyre-playing Semites are captive Jews. The sounding box of these lyres does not show, because it is behind the performers, and the crossbars are constructed somewhat differently from those of the Beni Hasan and Megiddo examples. The third man seems to play with his finger without a plectrum, yet the relief is not clear enough to allow a detailed study of the instruments and players.

On Jewish coins of the 2d century A.D. the later forms of Palestinian lyres are depicted (Fig. 10). These have a kettle-shaped sounding board below an oval body on which the lower ends of the strings are fixed, with the frame, showing decorations, being almost square.

Egyptian and Mesopotamian lyre players are also frequently pictured on the ancient monuments (Figs. 11, 12). They need no further description, since we are so well

informed about the Palestinian lyre with which we are mainly concerned in this Bible commentary.

The lyre, as referred to by the writers of the Bible, seems to have been an instrument of joy and gladness. It was invented before the Flood (Gen. 4:21), and was found in Laban's household (Gen. 31:27). As already stated, David played the lyre (not a harp) before Saul (1 Sam. 16:16, 23). It formed a part of the Temple orchestras (1 Chron. 15:16, 21, 28; Neh. 12:27; etc.), and is frequently mentioned in the Psalms as an instrument used for the praise of God (Ps. 149:3; 150:3; etc.). In captivity the lyres were hung on the willows in Babylonia because the musicians were too sad to play (Ps. 137:2).

Zither.—Three texts in the Psalms mention a musical instrument called *'aśor* in Hebrew, translated "instrument of ten strings" in the KJV. With this designation all commentators agree, because the Hebrew word means basically "ten." However, they vary in their opinions concerning the exact nature of this instrument. In Ps. 33:2 and 144:9 the word *'aśor* follows the term *nebel*, "harp," without conjunction, so that some scholars designate the combined term by a phrase such as "ten-stringed harp" (among others, the RSV). But in Ps. 92:3 a clear distinction is made between playing on the *'aśor* and playing on the "harp"; hence, Sachs must be right in considering the *'aśor* a separate instrument in all three texts where the word occurs.

The suggestion has been made that the *'aśor* is a lute, and the RSV translates it thus in Ps. 92:3. But this rendering cannot be correct, since all pictorial representations of lutes in Egypt and Mesopotamia show them to be so narrow that they could not accommodate more than two or three strings. Sachs suggests, therefore, that *'aśor* be identified with the "zither," a suggestion accepted by Sellers. The zither was not known to the people of Egypt and Mesopotamia, but was used by the Phoenicians, the neighbors of the Israelites. Two such ten-stringed zithers are depicted in the hands of two women on an ivory pyxis (a jewel case or a boxlike vase), found at *Nimrûd* (the Biblical Calah) in Assyria (Fig. 15) to which city this object must have come with other spoils of war from a Phoenician city. Also in a strange, illustrated letter attributed to Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin, a similar ten-stringed zither is depicted under the title *psalterium decachordum* (Fig. 16), to which is given the explanation, "It has ten strings, as it is written: I shall praise you on the ten-stringed psaltery" (Sachs, *op. cit.,* p. 118).

III. Wind Instruments

Flute.—The word "flute" occurs in the KJV only in Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15 as an instrument in Nebuchadnezzar's band, but there it is a mistranslation for a whistle or pipe. However, the flute, one of the oldest instruments shown on Egyptian monuments, could not have been unknown to the Hebrews, seeing it was used all around them, in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Arabia. The only term in the Hebrew Bible that can designate the flute is *'ugab*, mentioned in Gen. 4:21 as an instrument invented very early in this world's history. In this Genesis passage it is translated "organ" in the KJV and "pipe" in the RSV.

The translation "organ" follows the Vulgate, where the Hebrew term *'ugab* is rendered *organon*, by which Jerome understood the Panpipes, consisting of several pipes.

This identification cannot be correct, since the Panpipes were unknown in pre-Greek periods throughout the ancient world. Most modern commentators seem to agree that the *'ugab* was a "flute," receiving its name from *'agab*, "to love," since the flute is the wind instrument most closely connected with love. Sachs, however, thinks that the word *'ugab* reflects rather "the hollow, *oo*-like timbre of a long, wide, vertical flute" (*op. cit.,* p. 106).

If the identification of *'ugab* with "flute" is correct, the Hebrew flute must have been similar to the Egyptian, one of which not only pictures but actual specimens have survived to our day. The ancient Egyptian flute was a hollow reed pipe with finger holes drilled in its walls. The player held it in transverse position and blew. In Mesopotamia, flutes were made of reeds and also of clay.

This instrument is mentioned in the two oldest books of the OT, Genesis (4:21) and Job (21:12; 30:31), and is, with the lyre, one of the earliest musical instruments played on this earth. It seems not to have belonged to the instruments used in the Temple, where louder instruments were apparently preferred to the soft-toned flute. However, it is mentioned in Ps. 150:4 as one of the musical instruments with which the Lord was to be praised.

Double Flute or Oboe.—The instrument called in the Hebrew Bible *chalil*, literally "pierced," must be the "oboe" or "double flute." The KJV renders the word "pipe," while the RSV offers the translation "flute." It is first mentioned in the time of Saul (1 Sam. 10:5), and is from that time on attested throughout the period of the kings until the end of the kingdom of Judah (Jer. 48:36). Since all pipers depicted in the countries surrounding Palestine during the period of the kings of Israel and Judah played the double flute, but never the single flute, it is valid to conclude that the "pierced" wind instrument called *chalil* in Hebrew is the "double flute" or "oboe." The Egyptian oboes (see Fig. 18), as well as their Mesopotamian counterparts, consisted of two pipes which apparently had one mouthpiece. Their ends were held apart, with each hand of the performer fingering a separate pipe, of which some were cylindrical while others were conical. Since one hand of the player is regularly shown higher than the other in the pictures, it has been concluded that two tones were produced.

Sellers thinks that not only may the oboe have to be identified with the Hebrew *chalil*, but also the double clarinet, of which examples are known from ancient Egypt (*op. cit.,* pp. 41, 42).

The "double flute" was, like the simple one, not used for Temple music. However, it is mentioned repeatedly as an instrument of joy. It was in the hands of the prophets who met Saul after his anointment (1 Sam. 10:5), was played by the people when they gave expression of their joy over the coronation of Solomon (1 Kings 1:40), but was also used by licentious drunkards in Isaiah's time (Isa. 5:11, 12).

Horn.—Two Hebrew words are found in the Bible which designate an instrument made from animals' horns, the *shophar* and *qeren*. The first was made only of a ram's horn, while the latter term designated an instrument made of the horn of a goat or ram. The *shophar* is mentioned 72 times in the OT. The KJV 4 times translates it "cornet," and 68 times, "trumpet." The OT writers use *qeren* 5 times to describe a musical instrument. Of these 5 instances the translators 4 times render it "cornet" and once as "horn." The

translation “horn,” although not used by many modern translators, is actually the more literal and accurate one.

The horn is the only ancient musical instrument preserved in the Jewish religion today. It is brought into shape by steaming the animal’s horn until it becomes soft, so that it can be flattened and the bell end sharply bent. Although these details are mentioned neither in the Bible nor in the Talmud, there can be no doubt that its shaping in ancient times did not differ from the modern method. It was originally without mouthpiece, but in Talmudic times the *shophar*, which had a mouthpiece overlaid with gold, was used for announcing the New Year.

The horn was not a musical instrument in the sense that it was used to play tunes, since it produced only two harmonics (the second and the third), but it served as a signaling instrument, and is mentioned more frequently in the Bible than any other instrument of music. The horn was blown to warn the people at Mt. Sinai of the approaching divine manifestation (Ex. 19:16, 19; 20:18). The blowing of seven such horns was the sign for the walls of Jericho to fall down (Joshua 6:6, 20). The judges Ehud and Gideon gave war signals with the horn (Judges 3:27; 7:20), as well as King Saul (1 Sam. 13:3), and Joab, David’s general (2 Sam. 2:28). The coronation of Solomon was announced by the blowing of the horn (1 Kings 1:34, 39), as well as the arrival of each new moon (Ps. 81:3), and the proclamation of the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:9). The horn was used to sound alarm when dangers threatened the land (Neh. 4:18, 20; Jer. 4:5, 19; Eze. 33:3), and in an exceptional case it is mentioned as an instrument by which God could be praised (Ps. 150:3).

Trumpet.—Another Hebrew word translated “trumpet” in the KJV is the *chaṣoṣerah*, which occurs only once in the singular (Hosea 5:8), but 28 times in the plural. In contrast to the “horn” (Heb. *shophar* and *qeren*) this “trumpet” was made of metal. Numbers 10:1, 2 contains the divine order to Moses to have “two trumpets of silver” made “of a whole piece,” meaning probably beaten of one sheet of metal. Josephus, describing the construction of these trumpets (*Antiquities* iii. 12. 6), claims that they were straight tubes, a little less than a cubit (17.5 inches) long, slightly thicker than a flute, and ending in a bell.

Jewish coins of the 2d century A.D. depict pairs of trumpets, which seem to agree in their appearance with Josephus’ description, but the other ancient representation of a pair of trumpets from the Temple—the relief on the triumphal Arch of Titus in Rome, but in A.D. 70 after the victorious return of the Roman army from its campaign in Judea—shows them to be much longer.

One peculiarity not sufficiently explained yet is the fact that the trumpets seem to have regularly been used in pairs among the Hebrews. Moses made two trumpets, and two such instruments are shown on the ancient Jewish coins, as well as on the Arch of Titus, as already mentioned. The two trumpets must have been played either together or alternately, and possibly each on a different note.

Although Egyptian trumpeters are usually shown alone (Fig. 24), at least one relief is known on which a pair of trumpeters is depicted from the time of Ramses III at Medinet Habu (Fig. 25). This last-mentioned relief is instructive also in other respects, since it shows that wooden forms were inserted when the trumpet was not in use to prevent it from being bent or dented, as no process was known at that time to harden the silver

sufficiently so that it could withstand the rough treatment it received in military life. In the illustration given here the wooden form has been withdrawn from the trumpet and tucked under the performer's arm while he is blowing the instrument. In Tutankhamen's tomb were found two trumpets, one of silver and one of bronze, which also contained wooden forms for protection. Although about 33 centuries old, the two trumpets of King Tutankhamen are so well preserved that they can still be used, and were sounded in April, 1939, by bandsman J. Tappern of the English Hussars. The recording made at that time has occasionally been broadcast by the BBC.

The Hebrew trumpets were used for alarm (Num. 10:9), and also in conjunction with Temple music (2 Chron. 5:12, 13, etc.).

IV. Additional Remarks

The titles of some psalms contain certain obscure words which have been considered at various times to be designations for musical instruments, such as *neginoth* (Ps. 4, 6, 55, etc.), *gittith* (Ps. 8, 81, 84), and *sheminith* (Ps. 6, 12), but which probably designate, not musical instruments, but melodies or styles of singing. *Neginoth* may refer to the music of stringed instruments.

The Hebrew word *minnim* in Ps. 150:4 is correctly translated "stringed instruments" in the KJV, since it designates not a particular instrument, but a whole family including the harp, lyre, and zither.

The instruments listed in Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15 which made up Nebuchadnezzar's band, are explained in the comments on those texts, because they are not mentioned as belonging to the Hebrew musical life with which this article is concerned.

Since the musical instruments of the ancient Hebrews are classified in this article under names which they should have according to current archeological evidence, and which vary considerably from the names given them in the KJV, the Biblical names are listed here with the references to the pages on which they are discussed in this article.

NAMES OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE BIBLE

In Hebrew	*In the KJV*	*In This Article*	*Page*
Qeren, Shophar	Cornet	Horn	39
Mena'an'im	(RSV, castanet)	Sistrum	31
Cornet			
Ṣelṣelim, Meṣiltayim	Cymbals	Cymbals	30
Chalil	Flute	Double flute or oboe	38
Gittith	Gittith		41
Kinnor	Harp (RSV, lyre)	Lyre	34
Qeren, Shophar	Horn	Horn	39
Shalishim	Instruments of music (RSV margin, three–stringed	Triangle	32

	instruments, or triangles)		
ʻAśor	Instrument of ten strings (RSV, ten–stringed harp, or lute)	Zither	36
Neginoth	Neginoth		41
ʻUgab	Organ (RSV, pipe)	Flute	38
Chalil	Pipe	Double flute or oboe	38
Nebel	Psaltery	Harp	33
Sheminith	Sheminith		41
Minnim	Stringed instruments		41
Toph	Tabret (RSV, tambourine or timbrel)	Drum	30
Toph	Timbrel (RSV, sometimes tambourine)	Drum	30
Shophar	Trumpet	Horn	39
Chaṣoṣerah	Trumpet	Trumpet	40
Nebel	Viol	Harp	33

[1]

[1]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (1 Ch 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.